

REMARKS

With the present submission, claims 4-9 are pending, with claim 4 currently amended and claims 7-9 are newly added. No claims are canceled via the present submission.

Claims 4 and 5 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Maeda, U.S. Patent No. 5,317,519. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claim 4 describes an apparatus that includes a stock blank lattice point generating section, which represents the shape of the stock blank for a workpiece by “three-dimensional lattice point data,” and the claim specifies that these three-dimensional lattice point data comprise a “multiplicity of lattice points” arranged along three axes extending perpendicularly to each other.

Claim 4 further specifies that the lattice points are *each* defined by both:

- (1) “three-dimensional coordinate data,” *and*
- (2) “connection information indicative of whether or not lattice points are present at positions adjacent to a lattice point of interest along the three axes in the six axial directions.”

It should be clear from the context of applicant’s disclosure, for example, page 13, lines 6 *et seq.*, that the three-dimensional coordinate data, *e.g.*, (Xn, Yn, and Zn), used to define a one lattice point are not used as connection information, *e.g.*, (-x, +x, -y, +y, -z, +z), to define another lattice point.

In contrast, to anticipate the connection information of one lattice point, the rejection relies on the three-dimensional coordinate data of another lattice point. Specifically, the Office Action indicates starting on page 4 that Maeda discloses “connection information” in Fig. 3. The Office Action elaborates on page 5 in the form of an example: lattice point (7,2,5) has three-dimensional coordinate data (7,2,5) and connection information (6,2,9). However, Fig. 3 shows that (6,2,9) is also three-dimensional coordinate data defining another lattice point (6,2,9).

Thus, Maeda differs from applicant's invention, because Maeda does not disclose a lattice point defined by three-dimensional coordinate data, which are not used as connection information to define another lattice point. Applicant emphasizes this distinction by adding the following text to claim 4:

wherein the three-dimensional coordinate data used to define one lattice point are not connection information used to define another lattice point.

Because claim 5 depends from claim 4, the amendment to claim 4 also further distinguishes claim 5 from Maeda.

In view of the present amendment and the accompanying remarks, applicant solicits the withdrawal of the anticipation rejection of claims 4 and 5.

Additionally, applicant discloses an embodiment of the invention in which the connection information of a lattice point of interest includes "six connection signs" indicative of whether or not lattice points are present at positions adjacent to the lattice point of interest in six axial directions. (See, for example, applicant's disclosure, page 13, lines 6-15.) Maeda does not disclose such connection signs in Fig. 3.

Accordingly, applicant adds new claim 7, which resembles claim 4 without the present amendment and recites the following:

connection information *including six connection signs* indicative of whether or not lattice points are present at positions adjacent to a lattice point of interest along the three axes in the six axial directions

(*emphasis added*). Because Maeda does not teach such subject matter, claim 7 should be deemed allowable over Maeda. New claims 8 and 9 depend from claim 7, so claims 8 and 9 should be deemed allowable over Maeda for at least the reason of their dependency from claim 7.

Claim 6 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Maeda in view of additional prior art. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

The obviousness rejection of claim 6 relies in part on Maeda properly anticipating claims 4 and 5. As explained above, though, the anticipation rejection of claims 4 and 5 should be withdrawn. Accordingly, the obviousness rejection of claim 6 should be withdrawn for at least the reason of its dependency.

In view of the remarks above, applicant now submits that the application is in condition for allowance, and a Notice of Allowability is requested. If for any reason it is believed that this application is not now in condition for allowance, the Examiner is welcome to contact applicant's undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below to discuss resolution of the remaining issues.

If this paper is not timely filed, applicant petitions for an extension of time. The fee for the extension, and any other fees that may be due, may be debited from Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,
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